



Mayor Alan Autry

The Community Contract for Kids is a framework of common sense principles and approaches that will initiate immediate changes and compliment existing endeavors in the Fresno Unified School District. It is the result of input from current and former schoolteachers, superintendents and administrators; parents, business leaders, legislators and representatives from the non-profit sector. Most of all, it is an acknowledgement that we all have a personal responsibility to do our part in building the very best community possible.

I would also like to recognize and give special thanks to the Community Contract for Kids Task Force for their dedication and commitment to community. Their dedication to excellence has been an inspiration.

Sincerely,

Alan Autry
Mayor



COMMUNITY CONTRACT FOR KIDS

A CALL TO ACTION

Preamble

The level of success achieved by our public school system is the most important indicator affecting our community. Our quality of life is directly related to the success or failure of our schools. A partnership between FUSD and every system in the community is essential if we are to achieve our objectives of new and better jobs, higher incomes, safer neighborhoods, a diversified economy and a quality of life that inspires other communities to action. We have the vision, talent, and resources to make this a reality if we all accept responsibility for the part we must play. The destiny of our children and our community is in our hands. And let us be clear – it is the “system” that is cause for concern and not the dedicated teachers, administrators and staff who invariably endeavor to positively affect children’s lives.

Over fifty years have elapsed since local control for public education reverted, by default, to the State. Although the local system appeared to be fulfilling its obligation to the community at the time, it was thought that the State Legislature with its cumulative expertise could bring an even higher level of unity, conformity and continuity to the system. They were expected to provide fiscal stability and operational efficiency.

Now, decades later and to our general dismay, we have a system that is driven by a state legislated Education Code that is so filled with years of accumulated detritus that it is almost useless. In fact, most agree that it is a detriment to the education process in many instances. The economic stability that was expected has instead become a morass of confusion, non-responsiveness, political chicanery, mismanagement and inequality. Status Quo became the religion and apathetic governance its ministers.

When we lost control of our school system, the entire community became infected by the contagions that were inevitably created. Quite literally we found ourselves at the mercy of a failing school district and a perceived inability to effect change.

As a community, we seemed to ignore the school district's cries for help. Furthermore, we made matters worse by condoning unbridled growth away from the core area of the city. Urban sprawl spawned decades of neglect that resulted in the placement of increasingly heavy burdens on the individuals and institutions that were left behind. Crime began to rise, economic development became more difficult and unemployment soared.

And Fresno Unified School District continued to grow. We watched as it expanded to mammoth proportions – to the point where many agree that it should be divided into smaller, more manageable units.

Whatever the cause and whomever should share blame, one thing is certain – We must join forces and commit to a strategy that will have as its outcome a community that is made whole by the cooperation of all its parts.

What follows is our **Community Contract For Kids – A Call To Action**. It is a contract in the sense that promises are expected to be carried out between interested parties and the leadership of those entities are to be held accountable for their individual components.

For example, the municipal sector is expected to proficiently manage its resources in order to provide the community with: Safe, clean peaceful streets; A General Plan that will guide smart, efficient, economical growth for future generations; An infrastructure plan that will serve as a catalyst for improved neighborhoods, prosperous economic development and job creation; Prudent financial management that yields maximum value for every public dollar spent; and A commitment to strive for excellence in every endeavor. The business sector is expected to be innovative, creative and ethical in its practices and to invest in our community for mutual benefit. The non-profit and faith-based sectors are expected to look after the body, soul and heart of our city. And we are all expected to act and behave in accordance with a community set of values.

The details written into this contract are specifically relevant to the vision that every child in the Fresno Unified School District has a common and equal opportunity to develop his or her potential to live a productive and rewarding life that contributes to the well being of our community.

NOTE: A formal contract monitoring and feedback system will be implemented in accordance with the direction of the Community Contract Formation Task Force.

I. Board of Trustees

- A.** The Board is ultimately accountable for every aspect of the educational experience. Under the current structure, the connection between Board accountability and the Community has been severed.
 - 1.** The Board will accept responsibility and accountability for assuring the achievement of long-term systemic change in education governance. The Board will join forces with the County Office of Education for the purpose of re-establishing local control by implementing the “Alternative Accountability Model”. (Summary overview attached)
 - 2.** The Board will initiate legislative action written specifically for the purpose of addressing the needs of the district with regard to such issues as: block grant funding, relaxation and/or elimination of education code mandates, authoritative control, etc.
- B.** The Board is responsible for maintaining exclusive authority for the creation and enforcement of policy that places students’ needs above all. There is a crisis in our schools and it is essential that Board leadership have the courage, dedication, knowledge and skills to administer policies that put children first.
 - 1.** The Board will take the necessary steps to place the financial, administrative and operational control in the hands of those who are ultimately responsible for educational excellence – the on-site Principals and their staffs. The necessary support and training will be provided to effectively customize their schools in an organizational approach that balances local autonomy with clear accountability that is aligned with community goals and organizational strategies.

II. Fiscal, Administrative and Operational Audit

- A.** Fiscal and administrative accountability are the cornerstones of successful organizations and any effort to reform public education must begin with a clear understanding of their various elements.
 - 1.** The Board will commission an external assessment and evaluation of district finances and operational efficiency (commonly referred to as a “forensic audit”). This comprehensive examination will be completed no later than

June 30, 2005 and serve as the basis for charting a responsive, effectual improvement strategy

2. The Board will assure that the budget reflects the priorities of the District and will resolutely shift resources to initiatives that ensure that the needs of the classroom receive first priority throughout the budget process.
- B. Additionally, it is well documented that the District loses millions of dollars annually due to its inability to achieve some measure of full attendance.
1. The Board will establish a plan to recover this otherwise lost revenue by committing to proven policies, methods, procedures and the networking of partner agencies that address daily attendance
- C. A process that tracks students when they are absent and when they relocate to another school within or outside the District is essential to the maintenance of an accurate and useful student profile database. It is unacceptable that even one student would be "...lost in the system..."
1. The Board will direct staff to cooperatively and expeditiously partner with other governmental entities to develop a comprehensive student tracking and record coordination system to address student transience.

III. Pay for Performance (Management)

- A. Clearly communicated performance expectations will motivate desirable behavior and lead to desired results.
1. Compensation for all exempt personnel (those employees who are not represented by an acknowledged union contract) will be based on achievement of specific performance criteria as set forth in a formal district-wide management 'Pay-For-Performance' policy.

IV. Union Relations

- A. Constraints associated with some union contract requirements can serve as barriers to the efficient utilization of resources. An organization's effectiveness in carrying out its objectives is directly related to its willingness to partner with the affected labor organizations for the purpose of understanding and working toward the achievement of mutual goals. This is a call to action for district and union leadership to

collaborate in the development of complimentary philosophies, policies and agreements. Based on input from teachers, administrators and others, what follows are education/union issues that must be addressed:

1. Labor/Management Task Force

- a) A formally recognized Labor/Management Task Force will be formed no later than February 28, 2005 for the purpose of promoting mutual cooperation, appreciation, understanding, etc.

2. Teacher Transfer Policy – The seniority system of allocating teacher resources limits the district’s ability to deploy teachers where they are most needed.

- a) The Board will facilitate discussions with Union representatives for the purpose of negotiating a method that will make it possible to locate teachers throughout the district so their skills can match the needs of students.

3. Scheduling – The rigidity of the current contract does not allow flexibility for teachers to adapt their schedules to accommodate the needs of students.

- a) The Board will facilitate discussions with Union representatives for the purpose of establishing teacher authority to evaluate circumstances and adapt their schedules to better serve the needs of their students.

4. Performance Measurements – An organization’s efficiency is directly related to how it measures success. Without clearly communicated measurable objectives that correspond to district values and student achievement, failure is eminent.

- a) The Board will facilitate discussions with Union representatives for the purpose of establishing standards by which teacher performance can be evaluated relative to student achievement

5. Classroom Discipline – Without order and decorum in the classroom, a teacher’s ability to create an environment in which students are expected to learn is nearly impossible

- a) The Board will facilitate discussions with Union representatives for the purpose of establishing regulations that will allow teachers to take the necessary steps to maintain a safe and productive learning environment.
- b) The Board will act as the teachers' advocate with regard to matters of classroom discipline. Teachers must have confidence that the Board will support their supervision of the classroom and not succumb to political expediency.

6. **Teacher Discipline** – The need for teacher discipline is extremely rare. Fortunately the vast majority of performance and conduct issues can be resolved through the application of an effective management strategy. There are situations, however, in which a teacher has chosen not to accept the opportunity to succeed and subsequently puts the well being of students at risk.

- a) The board will facilitate discussions with Union representatives for the purpose of determining methods that will allow school administrators to act on matters involving teacher discipline swiftly, justly and in keeping with district values and applicable law.

V. Curriculum

The standard measurement of student achievement is the API and FUSD is typically represented at the bottom of the ledger even when compared to districts with similar demographics. A Board policy that emphasizes the basic tools that serve to prepare a student for a lifetime of learning must be the guiding principle when determining curriculum strategy and achievement criteria. Literacy is the key that unlocks the door to knowledge and must be the primary goal in all decisions related to student achievement. The following is based on exploration and research of proven formulas:

- A. **English Immersion** – School districts that aggressively implement English immersion programs have consistently shown higher rates of improvement than districts that maintain large numbers of students in bilingual programs through the parental waiver provision. A child that does not read at grade level by the age of eight years has only a one in eight chance of ever reading at grade level.
 - 1. The Board will establish policy based on the accepted educational precept English Immersion to assure grade level

English reading proficiency for every child by the end of the third grade.

- B. Literacy** – Grade level competency in English composition and comprehension must be as important in a Health class as it is in a Literature class.

 - 1. The Board will establish policy that will require mandatory reading, writing and recitation aptitude in every classroom curriculum – regardless of subject.
- C. Math and Science** – Equal rigor must be applied to the goal of grade level competency in math and science.
- D. Vocational Education** – Vocational and career technical education classes have become increasingly rare in high school curricula. Course opportunities in these areas must be increased and aligned with state, grade-level content standards to give students additional post high school options.

 - 1. The Board will establish policy to assure a greater increase of vocational and career technical education options and assure that the courses are aligned with state approved standards.
- E. Physical Education** – Students who participate in quality physical education programs receive lifelong benefits, including (1) the development of a variety of motor skills and abilities; (2) an understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle; (3) self confidence and a sense of self worth; (4) an appreciation of teamwork and how it will benefit life’s endeavors.

 - 1. The Board will establish policy that will require mandatory physical education courses at every grade level.
- F. Visual and Performing Arts** -- The visual and performing arts have been proven as an effective method of creating a bridge to higher academic achievement. The ability to express oneself artistically builds confidence and provides insight into an individual’s potential to realize goals that they might not have thought were possible. The creative arts are a critical part of a complete and fulfilling education and will add to students’ cognitive and social skills.

 - 1. The Board will establish policy that will maintain the visual and performing arts as part of a systematic approach to a well-rounded education.

- G. **Student Promotion** – The criteria for assessing a student’s readiness to pass from one grade to another will be grade level proficiency, not their age. The so-called practice of “failing a student forward” will not be tolerated.

VI. Character Education

- A. Character, based on sound moral principles, is the cornerstone of a productive and fulfilling life and the expected norm in our society. Hundreds of schools, school districts, national organizations, communities, cities, counties service organizations and businesses have experienced tangible positive results after implementing the well-known and highly respected CHARACTER COUNTS! curriculum. CHARACTER COUNTS! is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonsectarian character education framework that teaches the Six Pillars of Character: *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship*.
 - 1. The Board will assure that character education is a mandatory element of the district philosophy.
 - 2. The Board will establish policy that identifies the CHARACTER COUNTS! curriculum as the district standard.
 - 3. Every individual will be held accountable for their contribution to the program, the success of the educational process and the promise of a safe and positive campus environment.

VII. Administration, Teacher and Student Appearance Requirement

- A. The establishment of appearance requirements and a prerequisite dress code will create a sense of professionalism and mutual respect on campus.
 - 1. The Board will establish policy that will enact appearance and dress requirements throughout the district. Conformance will be expected at every position in the district hierarchy – including the Board, administration, teacher, student, classified, etc.

VIII. After School and Adult Mentor Program

- A. There are many collaborative initiatives underway involving Fresno Unified and a variety of partners, including the After School Consortium, Read Fresno, Schools as Centers of Community, Business & Union School Partnerships and many more.

1. The combination of public and private resources must be utilized to provide a safe and enriching environment for students during the critical after school hours of 3:00 to 6:00 PM and during the summer and weekends.
2. Schools should be the centers of our community. There are caring adults from all walks of life who are willing and anxious to help children in ways that would otherwise be unavailable to them. A welcome and encouraging environment promotes this type of dynamic partnership.

IX. On-Site Facilities

- A. State law has declared that every student will be provided the opportunity for an "...equal and common..." education. Our on-site facilities, however, are anything but equal and common. Every child deserves to attend a school that has accessible restrooms that are clean and sanitary, roofs that don't leak, heaters that heat and air conditioning that works. They should have the same access to modern technological learning tools as do students in other schools in the district.
 1. The Board will direct staff to prepare a comprehensive analysis of district facilities for the purpose of comparison and reprioritization of capital and maintenance improvements so that campuses with the most need receive first consideration.

X. Campus Safety

- A. Learning is directly related to the environment in which it is presented. The physical environment is as important as the academic. When campus conditions are plagued with the consequences of drugs and violence, the education process is rendered helpless.
 1. The Board will initiate a comprehensive "Zero Tolerance" policy relative to drugs and violence on campus. Additionally, staff will be directed to prepare an action plan in cooperation with outside agencies that are relevant to the assurance of a safe, drug and violence free campus environment.

Therefore:

I hereby acknowledge my commitment to the pursuit of every child's inalienable right to an equal and common education. I will dedicate myself to the principles charted in The Community's Contract For Kids, as well as any worthy commitment or endeavor that seeks to ensure a quality education for all the children of Fresno regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion or socio-economic position.

Name

Signature

Date



CITY OF FRESNO

Alternative Accountability Model

If public education is to truly meet the needs of California's uniquely diverse and dynamic populace, its ruling entities must agree that **individually accountable localities** are essential to success. A flexible system that holds local governing bodies responsible for providing a "...**free and equal education...**" to their citizenry is far superior to the sequestered, "one-size-fits-all" state structure we are burdened with currently. As it is, the State mandates minimum levels of performance and then withholds the most basic means of compliance – **individual autonomy**.

We are proposing an alternative to that which is now in place. **A system that will:**

- ...Establish the Superintendent of the County Office of Education as the recognized single point of accountability for all local education outcomes.
- ...Limit the negative influence of special interests and self-serving politics.
- ...Allow for timely, knowledgeable intervention when dealing with matters of fiscal management and student achievement.
- ...Be held to all established growth, testing and reporting requirements.
- ...Reestablish the critically necessary link between the local community and its public education system by establishing a local advisory board comprised of community stakeholders (parents, municipal government, businesses, institutions of higher education, education professionals, etc.).
- ...Maximize local resources by reallocating them to "best and highest" use from what is now described as the "...state paper chase...".
- ...Allow districts to focus on effective classroom instruction rather than state mandated projects that may not be appropriate for the local demographic.
- ...Most importantly, eliminate the state hierarchy as an excuse for failure.